DARK HORSE COMICS
DRAGON AGE
1 OF 3
BioWare

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DRAGON AGE™

UNTIL WE SLEEP

DAVID GAIDER | ALEXANDER FREED | CHAD HARDIN

DRAGON AGE™

UNTIL WE SLEEP

Part 1 of 3

King Alistair of Ferelden, accompanied by the notorious pirate Isabela and the dwarven rogue Varric Tethras, has journeyed leagues beyond his homeland to discover the secrets of the blood mage Aurelian Titus—a man Alistair holds responsible for the disappearance of his father.

Now, bolstered by a tenuous alliance with the dread Qunari, Alistair and his comrades launch their assault on Titus's dark fortress of Ath Velanis. But nothing has prepared them for what they will find within . . .

* * *

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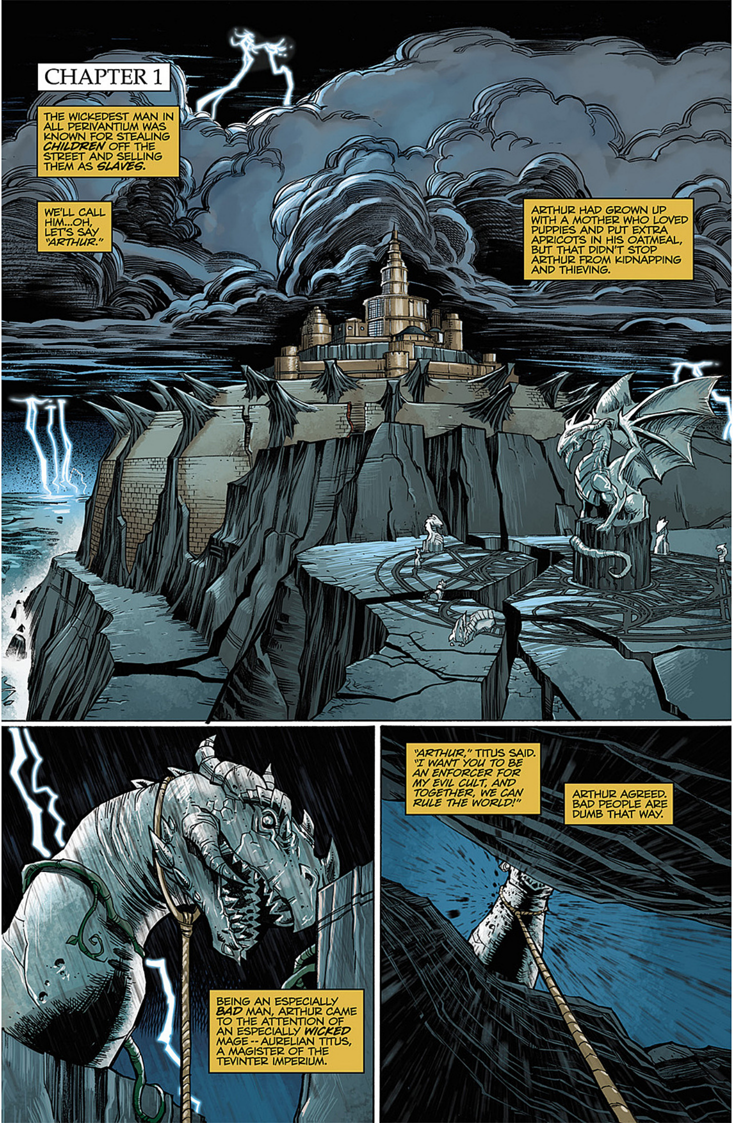
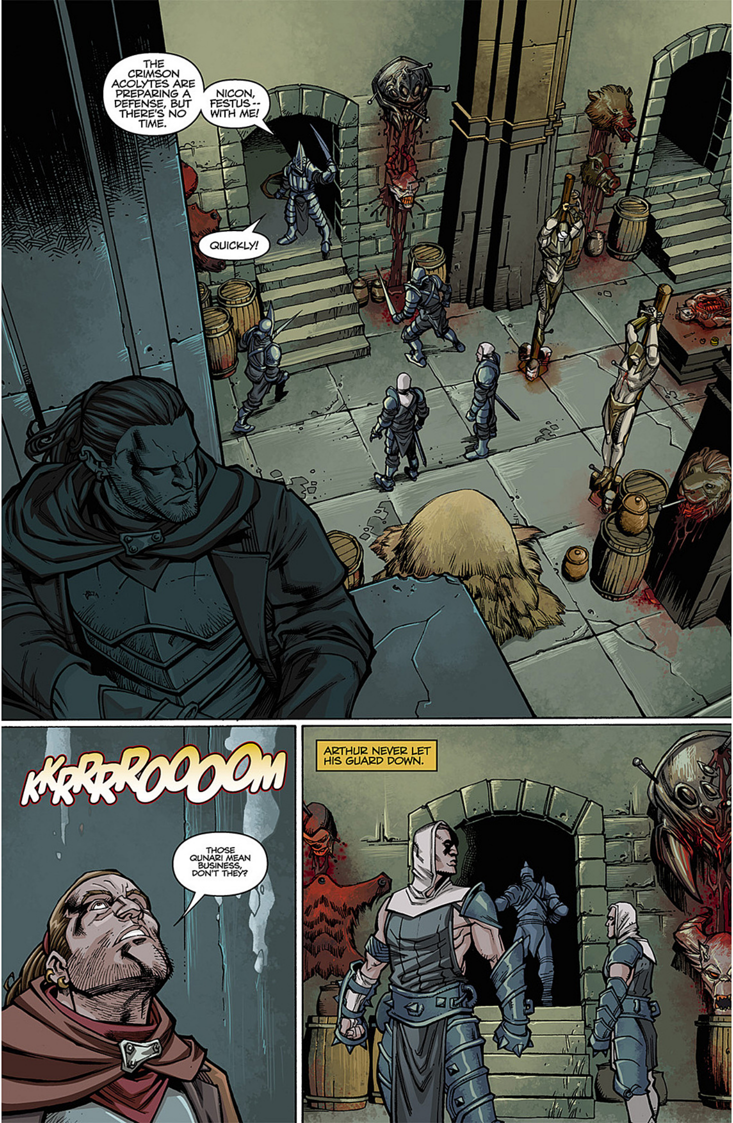
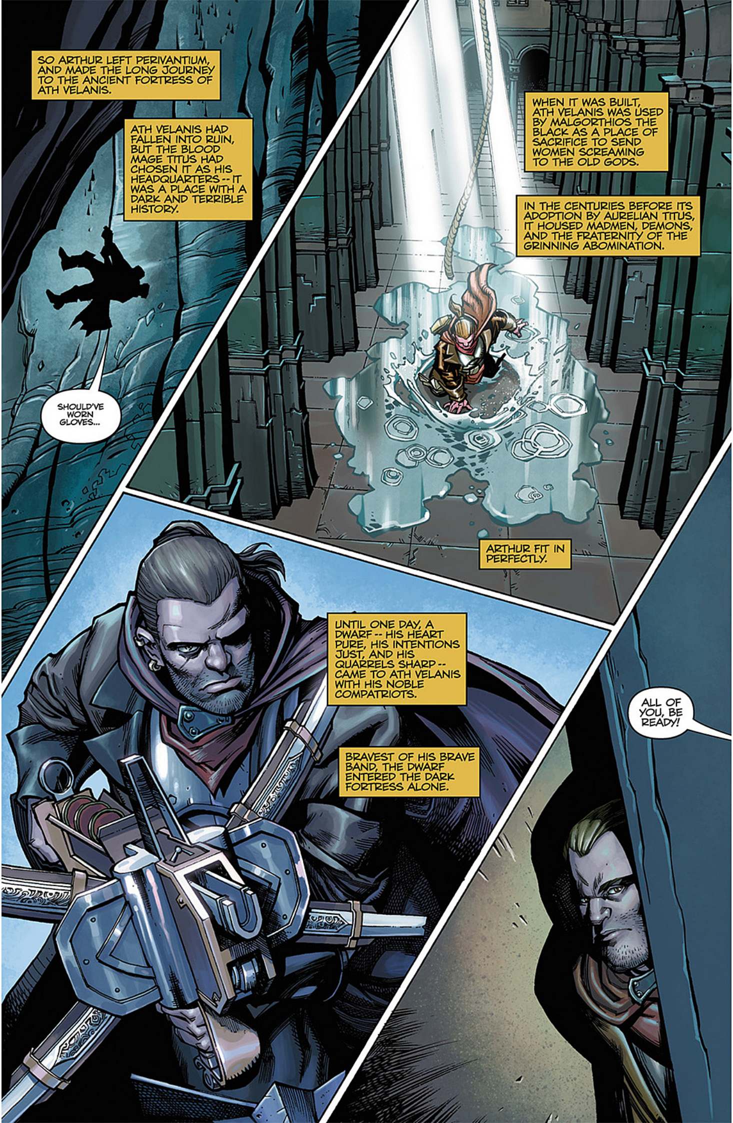
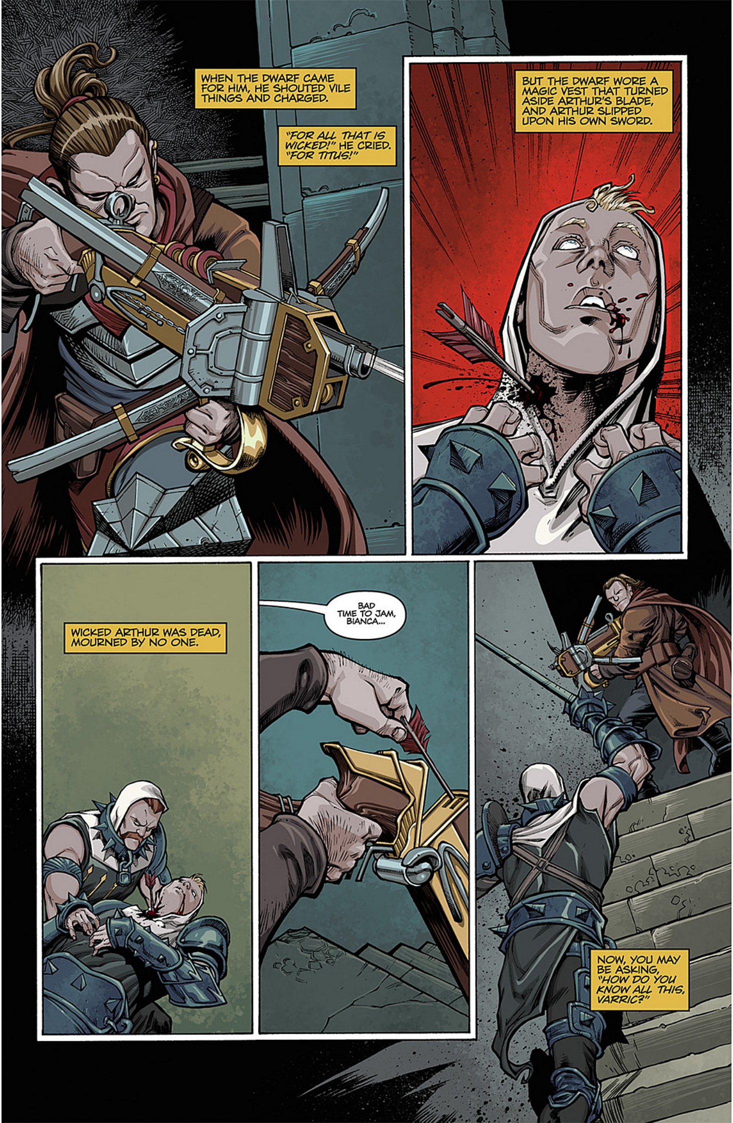
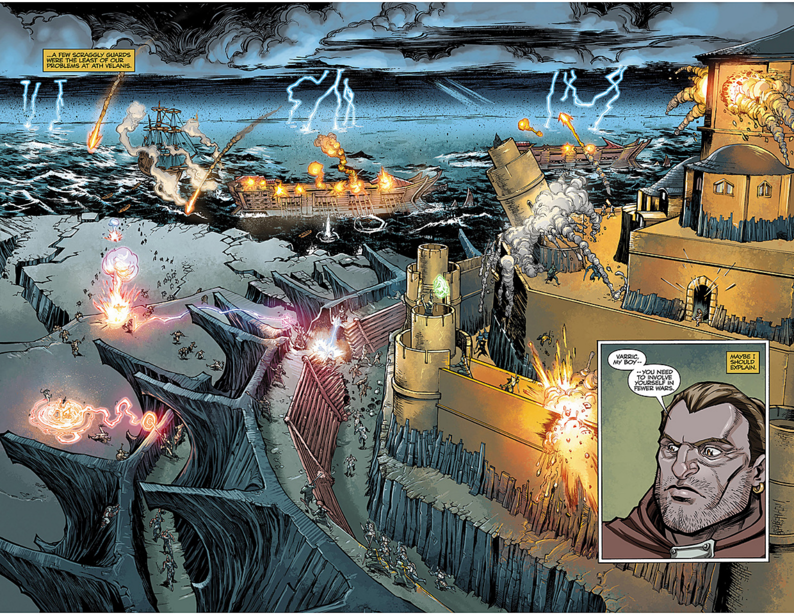
CHAPTER 1

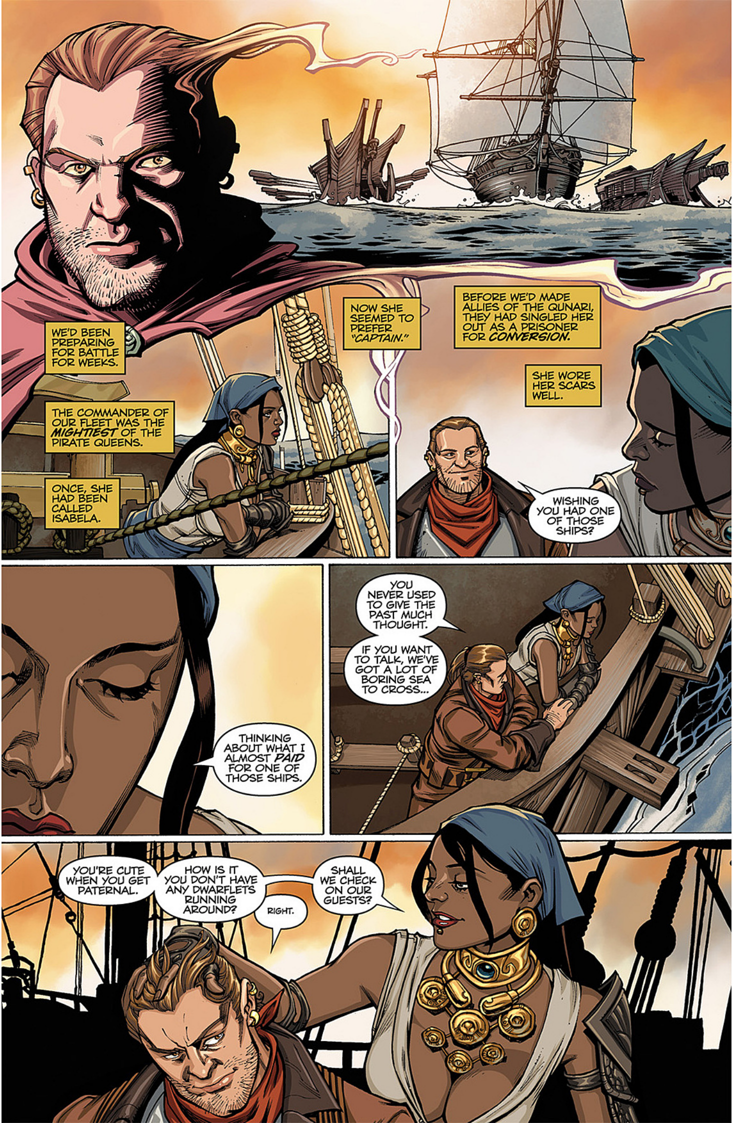

THE WICKEDEST MAN IN ALL PERIVANTIUM WAS KNOWN FOR STEALING *CHILDREN* OFF THE STREET AND SELLING THEM AS *SLAVES.*
WE'LL CALL HIM...OH, LET'S SAY *"ARTHUR."*
ARTHUR HAD GROWN UP WITH A MOTHER WHO LOVED PUPPIES AND PUT EXTRA APRICOTS IN HIS OATMEAL, BUT THAT DIDN'T STOP ARTHUR FROM KIDNAPPING AND THIEVING.
BEING AN ESPECIALLY *BAD* MAN, ARTHUR CAME TO THE ATTENTION OF AN ESPECIALLY *WICKED* MAGE -- AURELIAN TITUS, A MAGISTER OF THE TEVINTER IMPERIUM.
"ARTHUR," TITUS SAID. *"I WANT YOU TO BE AN ENFORCER FOR MY EVIL CULT, AND TOGETHER, WE CAN RULE THE WORLD!"*
ARTHUR AGREED. BAD PEOPLE ARE DUMB THAT WAY.

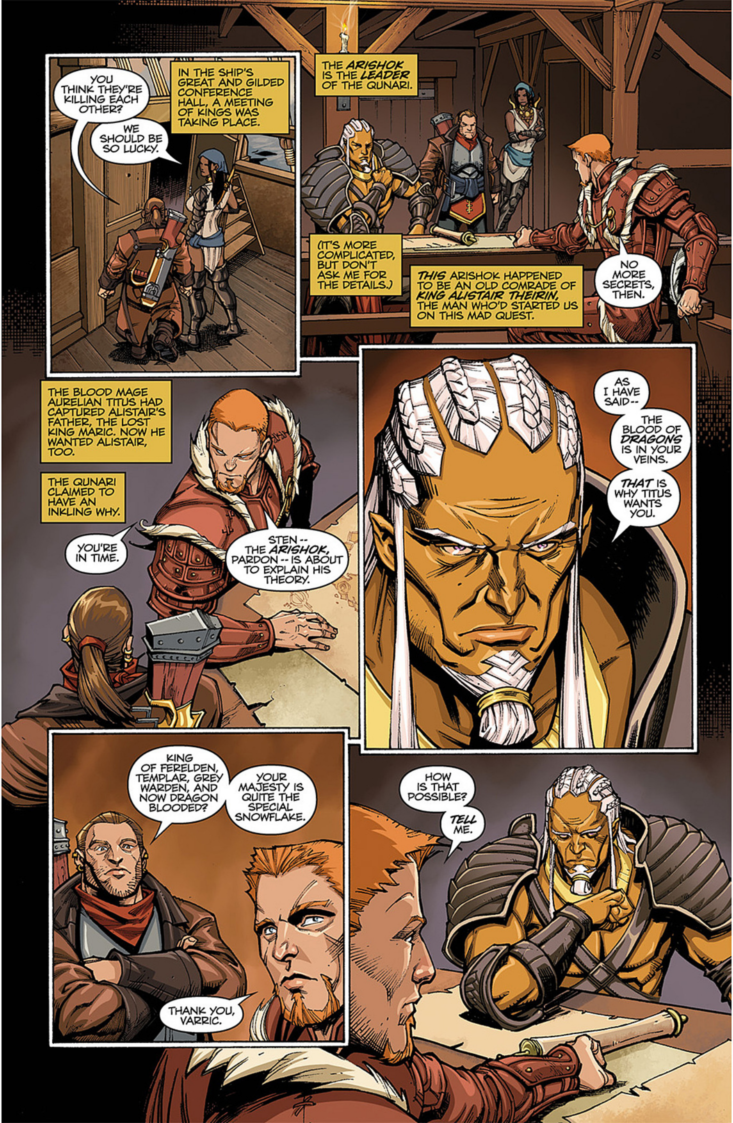

THE CRIMSON ACOLYTES ARE PREPARING A DEFENSE, BUT THERE'S NO TIME.
NICON, FESTUS -- WITH ME!
QUICKLY!
KKRRRROOOOM
THOSE QUNARI MEAN BUSINESS, DON'T THEY?
ARTHUR NEVER LET HIS GUARD DOWN.

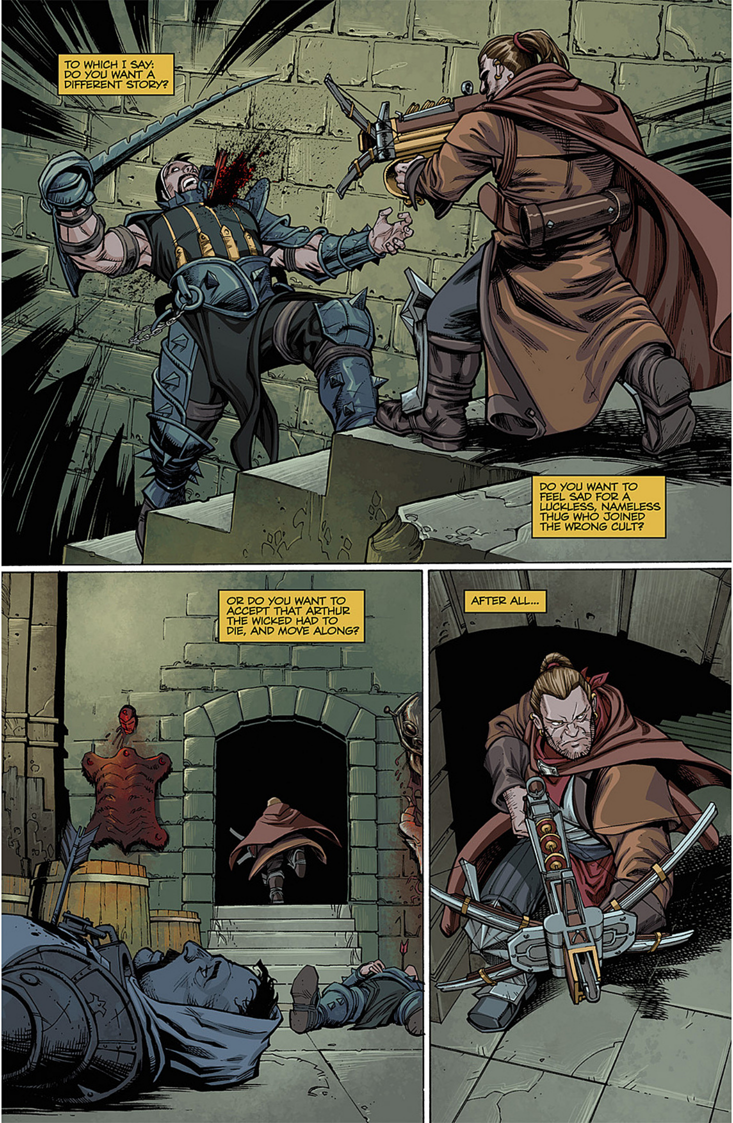

SO ARTHUR LEFT PERIVANTIUM, AND MADE THE LONG JOURNEY TO THE ANCIENT FORTRESS OF ATH VELANIS.
ATH VELANIS HAD FALLEN INTO RUIN, BUT THE BLOOD MAGE TITUS HAD CHOSEN IT AS HIS HEADQUARTERS -- IT WAS A PLACE WITH A DARK AND TERRIBLE HISTORY.
SHOULD'VE WORN GLOVES...
WHEN IT WAS BUILT, ATH VELANIS WAS USED BY MALGORTHIOS THE BLACK AS A PLACE OF SACRIFICE TO SEND WOMEN SCREAMING TO THE OLD GODS.
IN THE CENTURIES BEFORE ITS ADOPTION BY AURELIAN TITUS, IT HOUSED MADMEN, DEMONS, AND THE FRATERNITY OF THE GRINNING ABOMINATION.
ARTHUR FIT IN PERFECTLY.
UNTIL ONE DAY, A DWARF -- HIS HEART PURE, HIS INTENTIONS JUST, AND HIS QUARRELS SHARP -- CAME TO ATH VELANIS WITH HIS NOBLE COMPATRIOTS.
BRAVEST OF HIS BRAVE BAND, THE DWARF ENTERED THE DARK FORTRESS ALONE.
ALL OF YOU, BE READY!

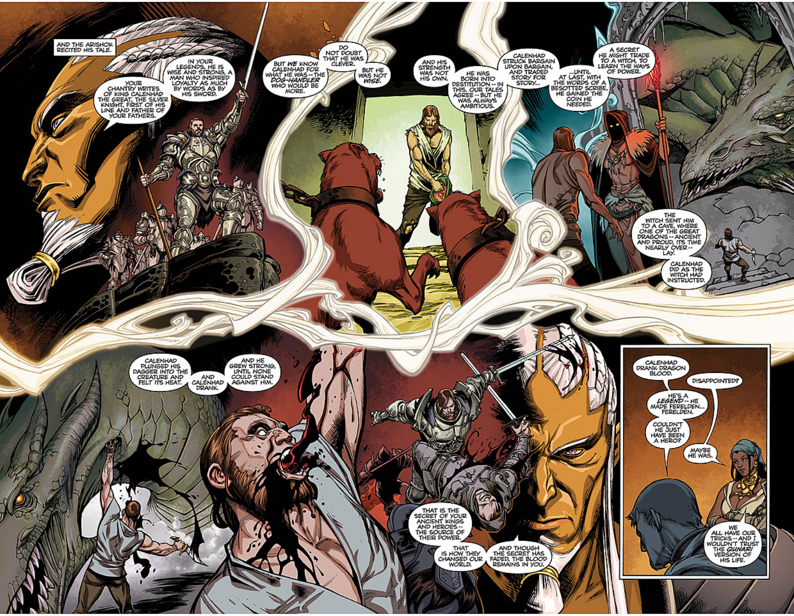

WHEN THE DWARF CAME FOR HIM, HE SHOUTED VILE THINGS AND CHARGED.
"FOR ALL THAT IS WICKED!" HE CRIED. *"FOR TITUS!"*
BUT THE DWARF WORE A MAGIC VEST THAT TURNED ASIDE ARTHUR'S BLADE, AND ARTHUR SLIPPED UPON HIS OWN SWORD.
WICKED ARTHUR WAS DEAD, MOURNED BY NO ONE.
BAD TIME TO JAM, BIANCA...
NOW, YOU MAY BE ASKING, *"HOW DO YOU KNOW ALL THIS, VARRIC?"*

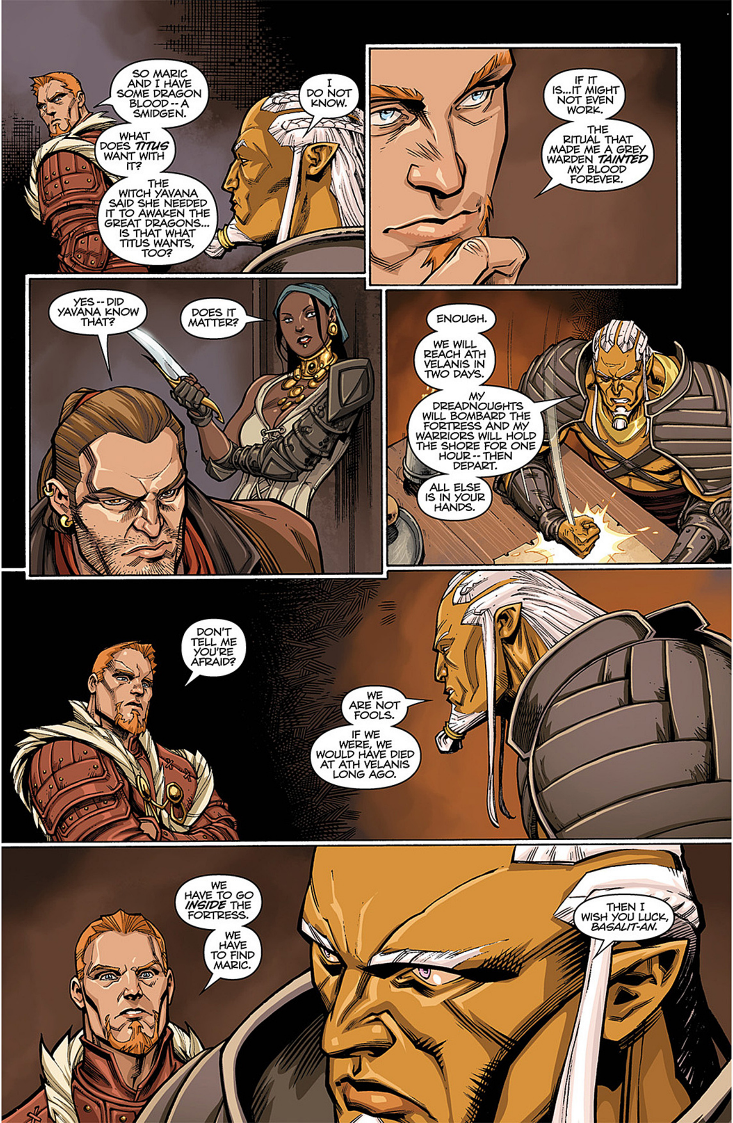

...A FEW SCRAGGLY GUARDS WERE THE LEAST OF OUR PROBLEMS AT ATH VELANIS.
VARRIC, MY BOY--
--YOU NEED TO INVOLVE YOURSELF IN FEWER WARS.
MAYBE I SHOULD EXPLAIN.

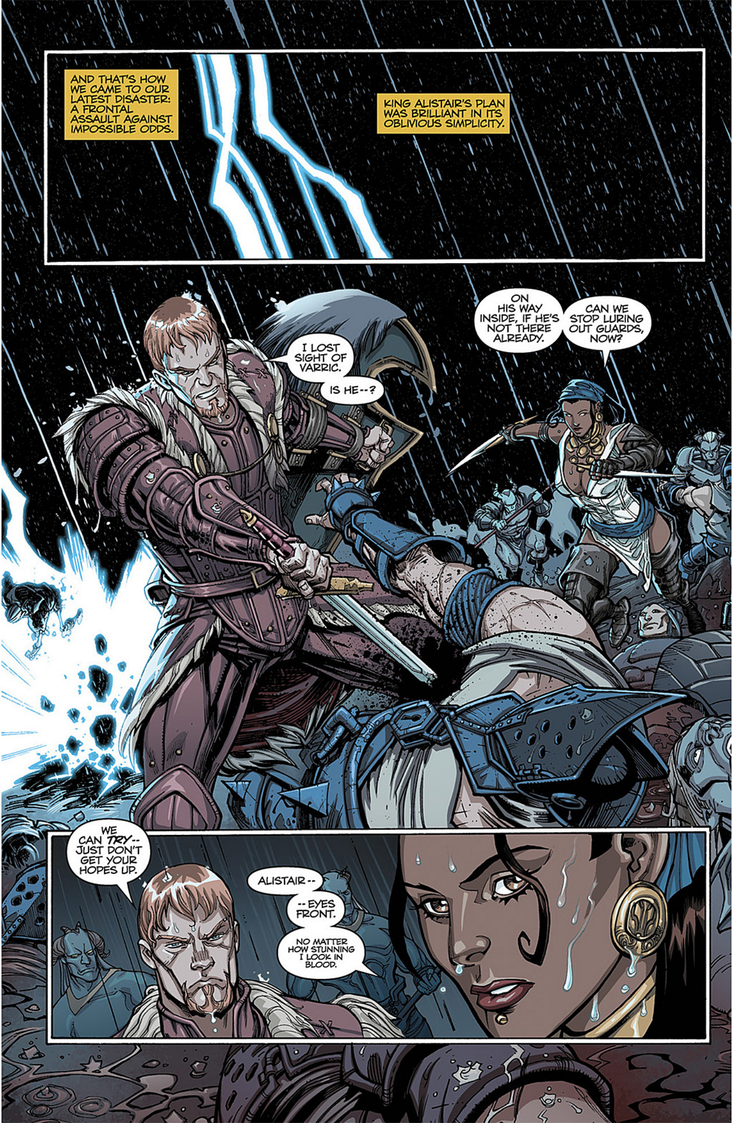

WE'D BEEN PREPARING FOR BATTLE FOR WEEKS.
THE COMMANDER OF OUR FLEET WAS THE *MIGHTIEST* OF THE PIRATE QUEENS.
ONCE, SHE HAD BEEN CALLED ISABELA.
NOW SHE SEEMED TO PREFER *"CAPTAIN."*
BEFORE WE'D MADE ALLIES OF THE QUNARI, THEY HAD SINGLED HER OUT AS A PRISONER FOR *CONVERSION*.
SHE WORE HER SCARS WELL.
WISHING YOU HAD ONE OF THOSE SHIPS?
THINKING ABOUT WHAT I ALMOST *PAID* FOR ONE OF THOSE SHIPS.
YOU NEVER USED TO GIVE THE PAST MUCH THOUGHT.
IF YOU WANT TO TALK, WE'VE GOT A LOT OF BORING SEA TO CROSS...
YOU'RE CUTE WHEN YOU GET PATERNAL.
HOW IS IT YOU DON'T HAVE ANY DWARFLETS RUNNING AROUND?
RIGHT.
SHALL WE CHECK ON OUR GUESTS?

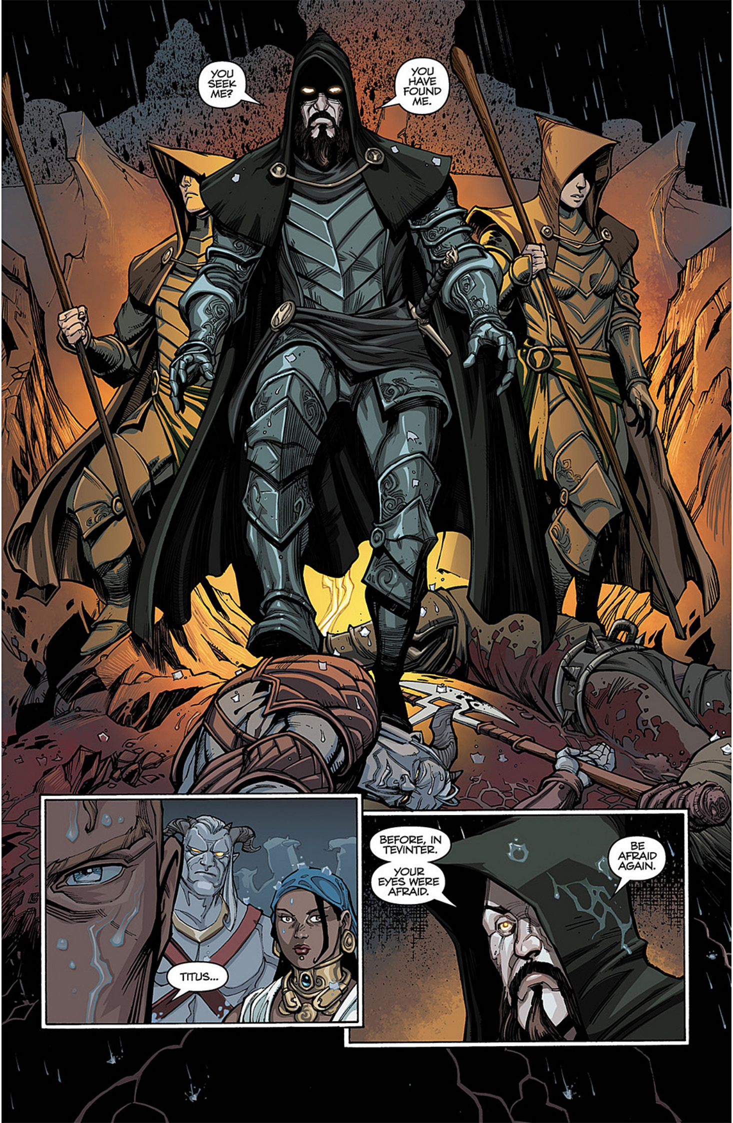

IN THE SHIP'S GREAT AND GILDED CONFERENCE HALL, A MEETING OF KINGS WAS TAKING PLACE.
YOU THINK THEY'RE KILLING EACH OTHER?
WE SHOULD BE SO LUCKY.
THE ARISHOK IS THE LEADER OF THE QUNARI.
(IT'S MORE COMPLICATED, BUT DON'T ASK ME FOR THE DETAILS.)
THIS ARISHOK HAPPENED TO BE AN OLD COMRADE OF KING ALISTAIR THEIRIN, THE MAN WHO'D STARTED US ON THIS MAD QUEST.
NO MORE SECRETS, THEN.
THE BLOOD MAGE AURELIAN TITUS HAD CAPTURED ALISTAIR'S FATHER, THE LOST KING MARIC. NOW HE WANTED ALISTAIR, TOO.
THE QUNARI CLAIMED TO HAVE AN INKLING WHY.
YOU'RE IN TIME.
STEN -- THE ARISHOK, PARDON -- IS ABOUT TO EXPLAIN HIS THEORY.
AS I HAVE SAID--
THE BLOOD OF DRAGONS IS IN YOUR VEINS.
THAT IS WHY TITUS WANTS YOU.
KING OF FERELDEN, TEMPLAR, GREY WARDEN, AND NOW DRAGON BLOODED?
YOUR MAJESTY IS QUITE THE SPECIAL SNOWFLAKE.
THANK YOU, VARRIC.
HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE?
TELL ME.

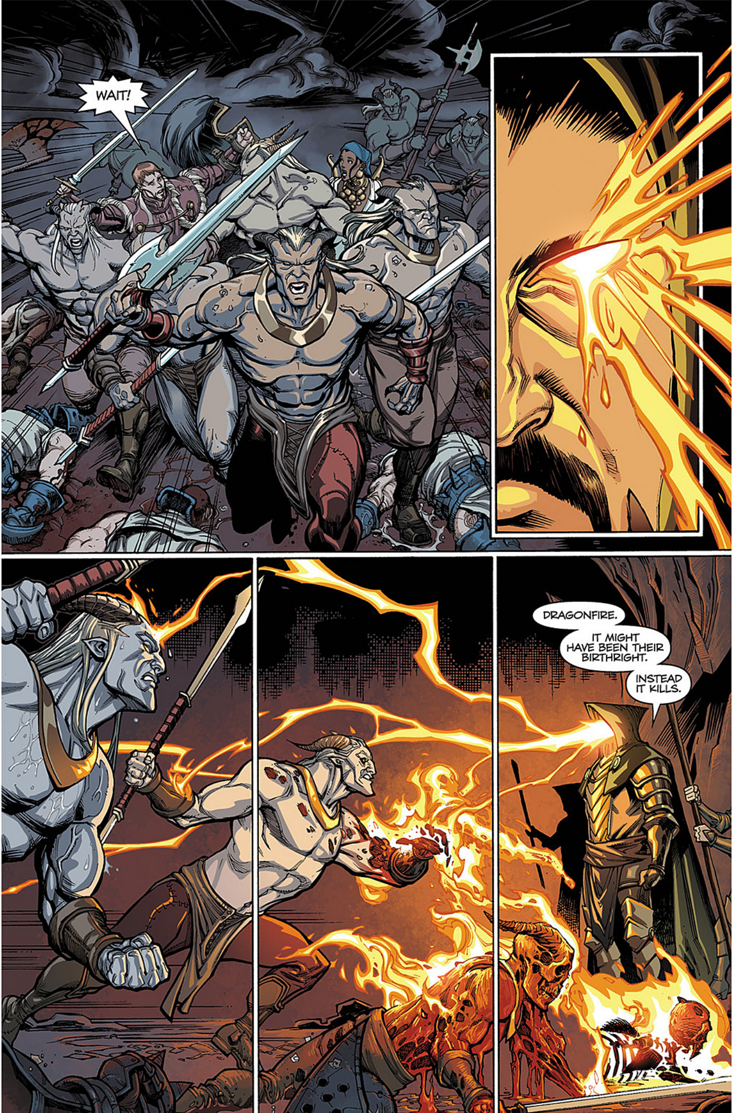

TO WHICH I SAY: DO YOU WANT A DIFFERENT STORY?
DO YOU WANT TO FEEL SAD FOR A LUCKLESS, NAMELESS THUG WHO JOINED THE WRONG CULT?
OR DO YOU WANT TO ACCEPT THAT ARTHUR THE WICKED HAD TO DIE, AND MOVE ALONG?
AFTER ALL...

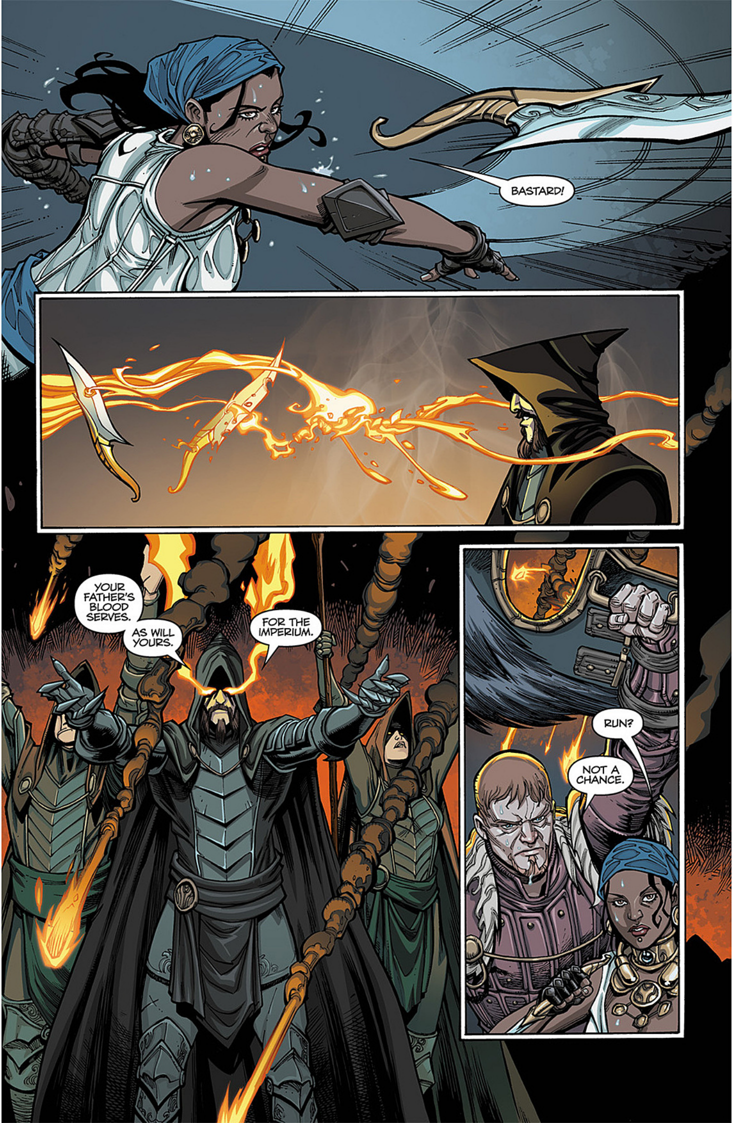

AND THE ARISHOK RECITED HIS TALE.
YOUR CHANTRY WRITES OF KING CALENHAD THE GREAT, THE SILVER KNIGHT, FIRST OF HIS LINE AND FATHER OF YOUR FATHERS.
IN YOUR LEGENDS, HE IS WISE AND STRONG, A MAN WHO INSPIRED LOYALTY AS MUCH BY WORDS AS BY HIS SWORD.
BUT *WE* KNOW CALENHAD FOR WHAT HE WAS -- THE *DOG-HANDLER* WHO WOULD BE MORE.
DO NOT DOUBT THAT HE WAS CLEVER.
BUT HE WAS NOT *WISE*.
AND HIS STRENGTH WAS NOT HIS OWN.
HE WAS BORN INTO DESTITUTION -- IN THIS, OUR TALES AGREE -- BUT HE WAS ALWAYS AMBITIOUS.
CALENHAD STRUCK BARGAIN UPON BARGAIN, AND TRADED STORY FOR STORY...
...UNTIL AT LAST, WITH THE WORDS OF A BESOTTED SCRIBE, HE GAINED THE COIN HE NEEDED.
A SECRET HE MIGHT TRADE TO A WITCH, TO LEARN THE WAYS OF POWER.
THE WITCH SENT HIM TO A CAVE, WHERE ONE OF THE GREAT DRAGONS -- ANCIENT AND PROUD, ITS TIME NEARLY OVER -- LAY.
CALENHAD DID AS THE WITCH HAD INSTRUCTED.
CALENHAD PLUNGED HIS DAGGER INTO THE CREATURE AND FELT ITS HEAT.
AND CALENHAD DRANK.
AND HE GREW STRONG, UNTIL NONE COULD STAND AGAINST HIM.
THAT IS THE SECRET OF YOUR ANCIENT KINGS AND HEROES -- THE SOURCE OF THEIR POWER.
THAT IS HOW THEY CHANGED OUR WORLD.
AND THOUGH THE SECRET HAS FADED, THE BLOOD REMAINS IN YOU.
CALENHAD DRANK DRAGON BLOOD.
HE'S A *LEGEND* -- HE MADE FERELDEN... FERELDEN.
COULDN'T HE JUST HAVE BEEN A HERO?
DISAPPOINTED?
MAYBE HE WAS.
WE ALL HAVE OUR TRICKS -- AND I WOULDN'T TRUST THE *QUNARI* VERSION OF HIS LIFE.

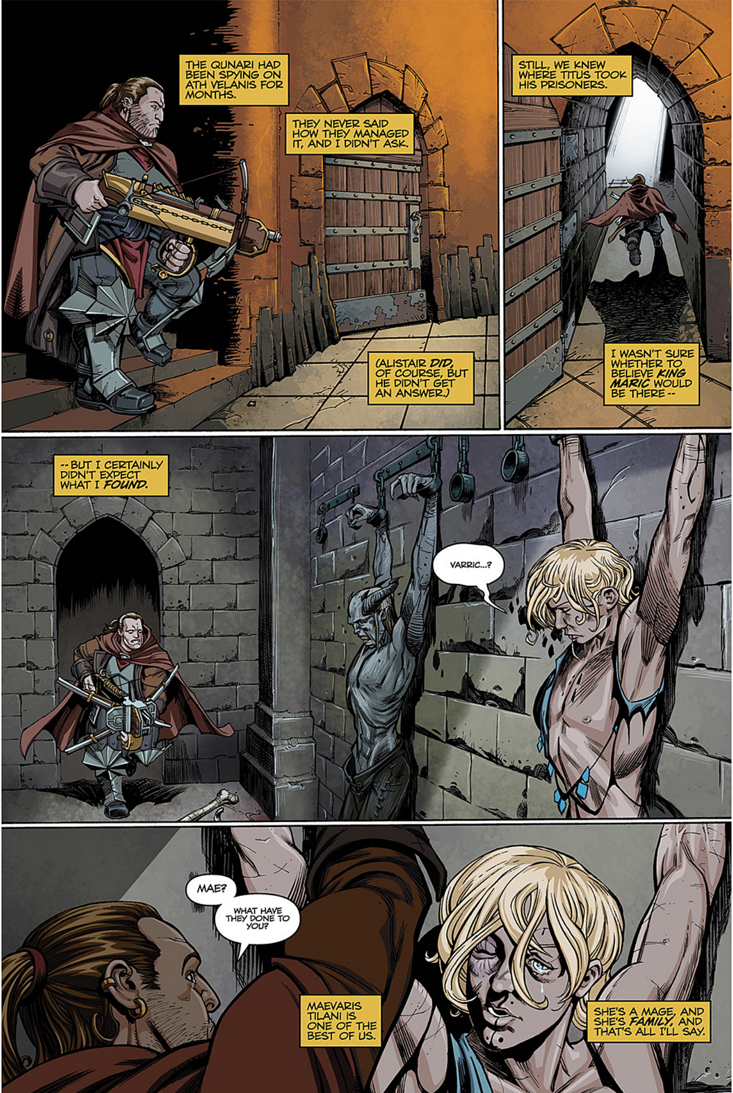

SO MARIC AND I HAVE SOME DRAGON BLOOD -- A SMIDGEN.
WHAT DOES *TITUS* WANT WITH IT?
THE WITCH YAVANA SAID SHE NEEDED IT TO AWAKEN THE GREAT DRAGONS... IS THAT WHAT TITUS WANTS, TOO?
I DO NOT KNOW.
IF IT IS...IT MIGHT NOT EVEN WORK.
THE RITUAL THAT MADE ME A GREY WARDEN *TAINTED* MY BLOOD FOREVER.
YES -- DID YAVANA KNOW THAT?
DOES IT MATTER?
ENOUGH.
WE WILL REACH ATH VELANIS IN TWO DAYS.
MY DREADNOUGHTS WILL BOMBARD THE FORTRESS AND MY WARRIORS WILL HOLD THE SHORE FOR ONE HOUR -- THEN DEPART.
ALL ELSE IS IN YOUR HANDS.
DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE AFRAID?
WE ARE NOT FOOLS.
IF WE WERE, WE WOULD HAVE DIED AT ATH VELANIS LONG AGO.
WE HAVE TO GO *INSIDE* THE FORTRESS.
WE HAVE TO FIND MARIC.
THEN I WISH YOU LUCK, *BASALIT-AN.*

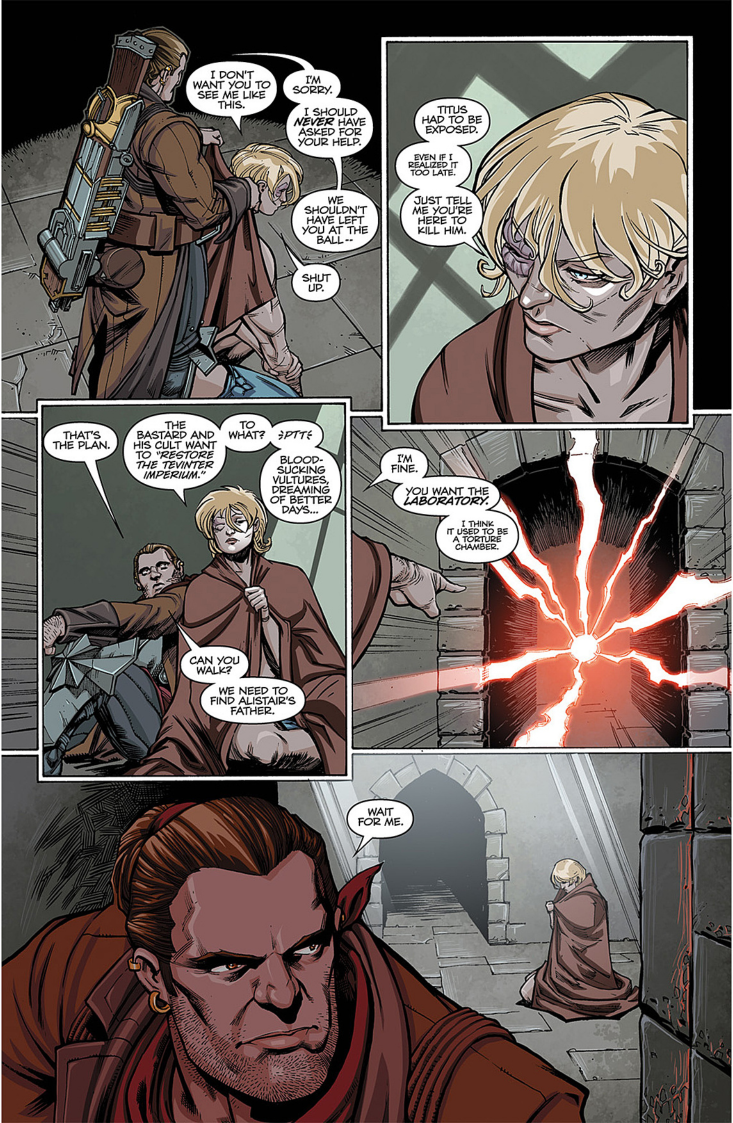

AND THAT'S HOW WE CAME TO OUR LATEST DISASTER: A FRONTAL ASSAULT AGAINST IMPOSSIBLE ODDS.
KING ALISTAIR'S PLAN WAS BRILLIANT IN ITS OBLIVIOUS SIMPLICITY.
I LOST SIGHT OF VARRIC.
IS HE--?
ON HIS WAY INSIDE, IF HE'S NOT THERE ALREADY.
CAN WE STOP LURING OUT GUARDS, NOW?
WE CAN *TRY*-- JUST DON'T GET YOUR HOPES UP.
ALISTAIR--
--EYES FRONT.
NO MATTER HOW STUNNING I LOOK IN BLOOD.

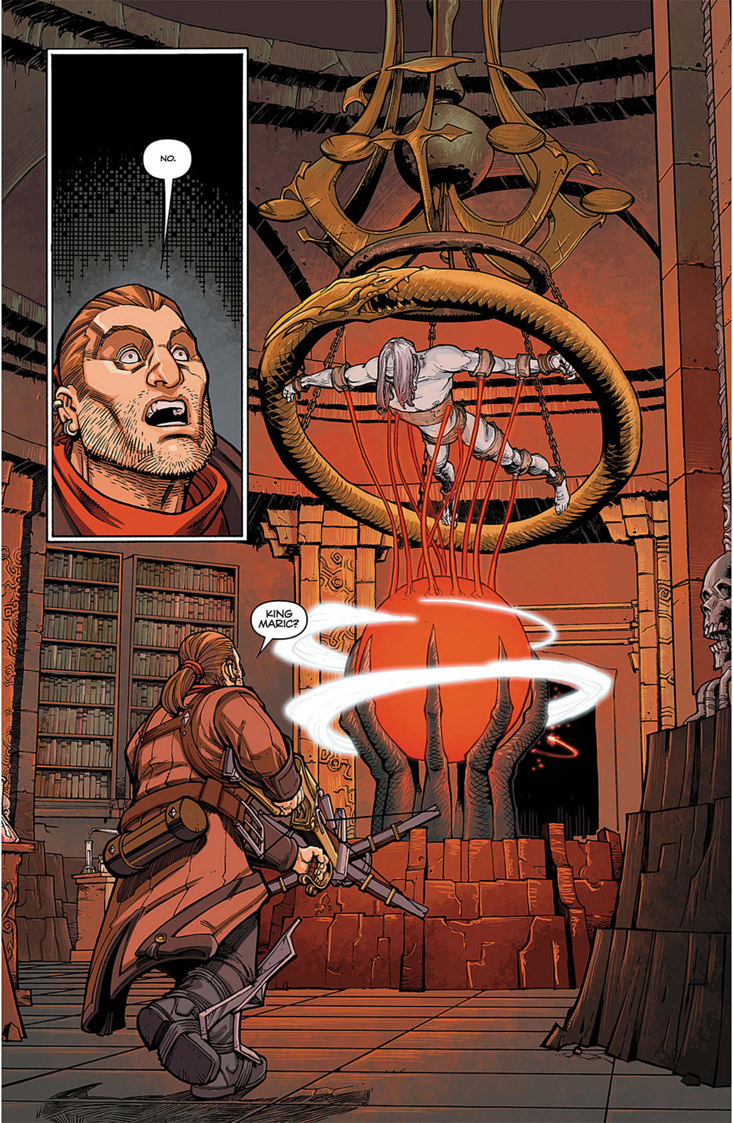

YOU SEEK ME?
YOU HAVE FOUND ME.
TITUS...
BEFORE, IN TEVINTER.
YOUR EYES WERE AFRAID.
BE AFRAID AGAIN.

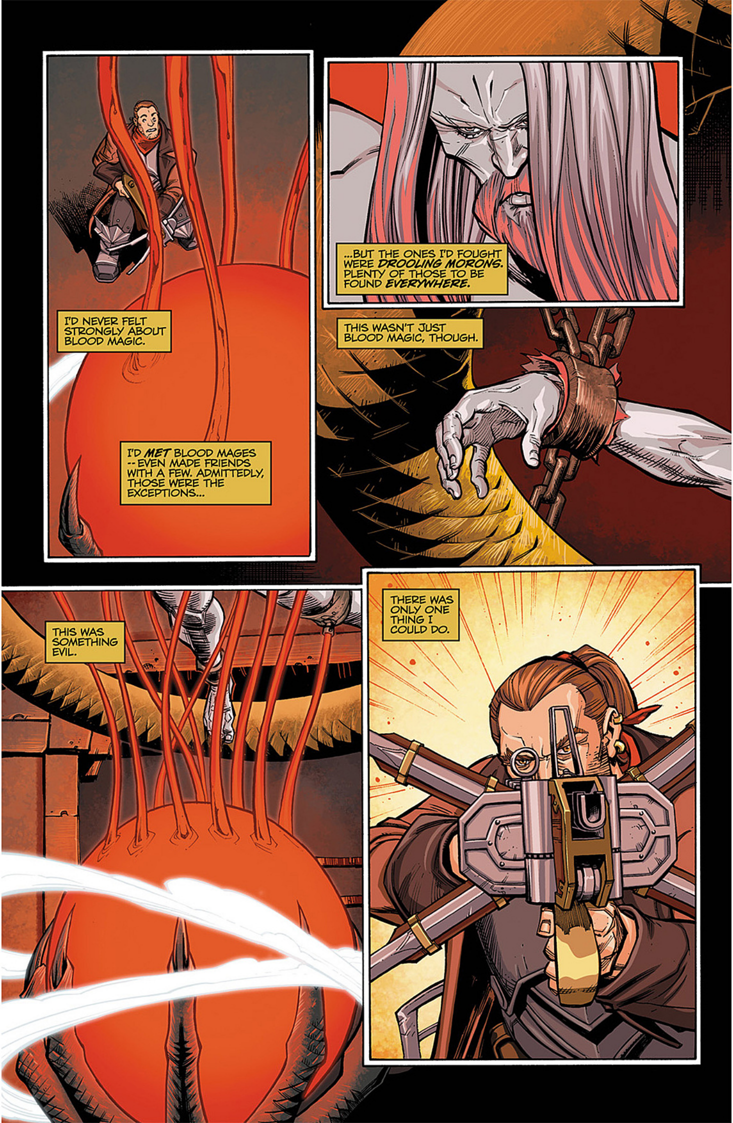

WAIT!
DRAGONFIRE.
IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN THEIR BIRTHRIGHT.
INSTEAD IT KILLS.

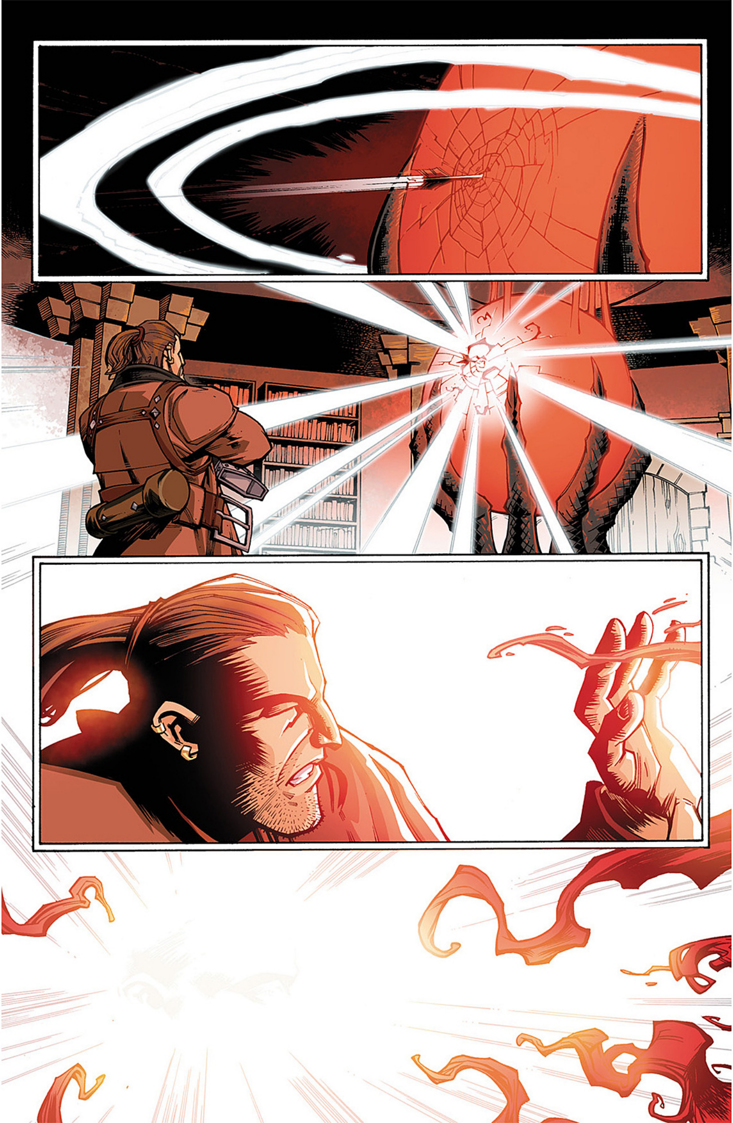

BASTARD!
YOUR FATHER'S BLOOD SERVES.
AS WILL YOURS.
FOR THE IMPERIUM.
RUN?
NOT A CHANCE.

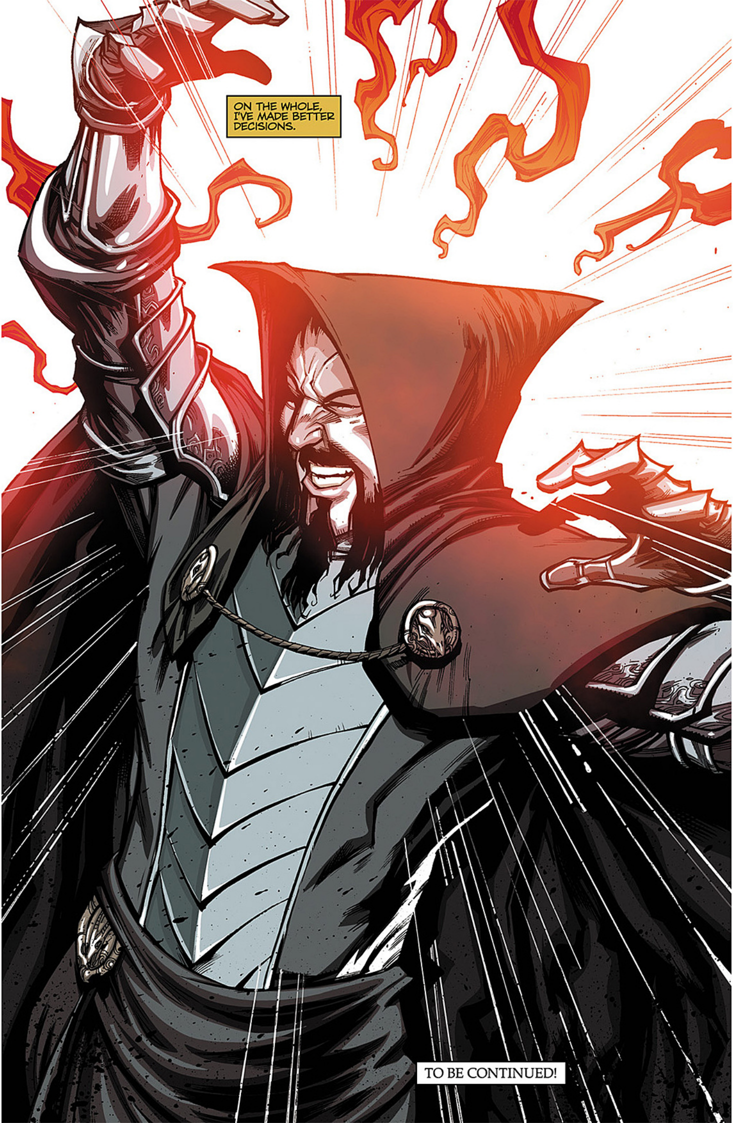

THE QUNARI HAD BEEN SPYING ON ATH VELANIS FOR MONTHS.
THEY NEVER SAID HOW THEY MANAGED IT, AND I DIDN'T ASK.
(ALISTAIR *DID*, OF COURSE, BUT HE DIDN'T GET AN ANSWER.)
STILL, WE KNEW WHERE TITUS TOOK HIS PRISONERS.
I WASN'T SURE WHETHER TO BELIEVE *KING MARIC* WOULD BE THERE --
-- BUT I CERTAINLY DIDN'T EXPECT WHAT I *FOUND*.
VARRIC...?
MAE?
WHAT HAVE THEY DONE TO YOU?
MAEVARIS TILANI IS ONE OF THE BEST OF US.
SHE'S A MAGE, AND SHE'S *FAMILY*, AND THAT'S ALL I'LL SAY.


I DON'T WANT YOU TO SEE ME LIKE THIS.
I'M SORRY.
I SHOULD *NEVER* HAVE ASKED FOR YOUR HELP.
WE SHOULDN'T HAVE LEFT YOU AT THE BALL --
SHUT UP.
TITUS HAD TO BE EXPOSED.
EVEN IF I REALIZED IT TOO LATE.
JUST TELL ME YOU'RE HERE TO KILL HIM.
THAT'S THE PLAN.
THE BASTARD AND HIS CULT WANT TO *"RESTORE THE TEVINTER IMPERIUM."*
TO WHAT?
PTT
BLOOD-SUCKING VULTURES, DREAMING OF BETTER DAYS...
CAN YOU WALK?
WE NEED TO FIND ALISTAIR'S FATHER.
I'M FINE.
YOU WANT THE *LABORATORY.*
I THINK IT USED TO BE A TORTURE CHAMBER.
WAIT FOR ME.


NO.
KING MARIC?


I'D NEVER FELT STRONGLY ABOUT BLOOD MAGIC.
I'D *MET* BLOOD MAGES -- EVEN MADE FRIENDS WITH A FEW. ADMITTEDLY, THOSE WERE THE EXCEPTIONS...
...BUT THE ONES I'D FOUGHT WERE ***DROOLING MORONS.*** PLENTY OF THOSE TO BE FOUND ***EVERYWHERE.***
THIS WASN'T JUST BLOOD MAGIC, THOUGH.
THIS WAS SOMETHING EVIL.
THERE WAS ONLY ONE THING I COULD DO.




ON THE WHOLE, I'VE MADE BETTER DECISIONS.
TO BE CONTINUED!